

Book Reviews

W. S. CRAIG, *History of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1976, 4to, pp. xxix, 1125, illus., £35.00.

An immense amount of labour was spent on this book by the late Professor W. S. Craig, and it is tragic that he did not live to see the finished product.

It will, however, serve to commemorate the College's forthcoming tercentenary. Since its establishment by charter, granted by Charles II in 1681, the College has played an important role not only in Edinburgh, but also in relationship with its sister colleges in Glasgow and London, and with its Fellows and Members in all parts of the British Commonwealth. Its influence outside the University has been, and still is, an important factor in its functioning. It has played an active role in social reforms, particularly in Scotland, and in advocating improved public health and sanitation in Edinburgh. Today it is actively involved with postgraduate teaching and research, and its library is one of the best of its kind in Britain, having been founded in 1682.

Professor Craig traces its evolution in great detail and deals with every possible aspect of its activity both in Edinburgh and elsewhere, over its three hundred years of existence. The material used is fully supported with references and notes and with several long extracts from documents and there are many excellent illustrations. Several appendices include additional data, one of them (E) having a translation of the College's Charter. The price is not excessive when the size and the quality of production are taken into account.

This is a book for reference rather than for continuous reading and the excellent indexes will direct the enquirer to the topic or person he seeks. As a repository of factual information it will remain a definitive work, but unfortunately it does not go beyond this. In other words, little attempt is made to study the local, national and international background influences, which affect the establishment and survival of any institution. As Dr. Christopher Lawrence and other historians are pointing out, the Edinburgh scene particularly in the eighteenth century as it influenced medicine was very complex, and in order to comprehend the College fully we must understand the extra-Collegiate climate and the problems it encountered, as well as the state of medicine elsewhere in the world. This is not, however, to belittle Professor Craig's enormous labours for which we should be most grateful. It would seem, however, that the Edinburgh Royal College of Physicians has not had the services of the kind of historian who recorded the history of its some-time rival institution in London.

A. L. DONOVAN, *Philosophical chemistry in the Scottish Enlightenment. The doctrines and discoveries of William Cullen and Joseph Black*, Edinburgh University Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. x, 343, illus., £7.00.

Dr. Donovan of the University of West Virginia is concerned here with a study of the interaction of the two great eighteenth-century Scottish chemists, William Cullen (1710–1790), and his pupil Joseph Black (1728–1799) who discovered carbon dioxide in chalk when seeking a lithotropic agent. This important advance and its genesis are discussed here in detail; it is essential to realize that Black accepted the theory of phlogiston at this time, although he abandoned it later. This and Black's influence on the emerging science of heat form the second part of the book, the first being an